

# **CALIFORNIA CHILDREN AND FAMILIES INITIATIVE**

## **A Synopsis**

The California Children and Families Act of 1998 (Proposition 10) aims to support children from prenatal to age five by creating a comprehensive and integrated system of information and services to promote early childhood development. The initiative added an additional 50-cents-per-pack tax to cigarettes and a comparable tax to other tobacco products.

Current research indicates that the emotional, physical and intellectual environment to which a child is exposed has a profound impact on how his or her brain develops. The experience that an infant or toddler has with parents and caregivers influences how he or she functions when reaching school and throughout life.

Currently, most money spent on children's programs in California is directed toward children older than five years of age. The monies collected through Proposition 10, however, are directed toward the support of the prenatal period to age five. Areas of focus are parent education and support services, childcare and early education, and health and wellness. The intent is for all California children to be healthy, to live in a healthy and supportive family environment and to enter school ready to learn. All California children from birth to the age of five and their families are eligible for services, regardless of residency status or income level.

Approximately \$700 million is expected to be collected each year from the tobacco tax. Twenty percent of the revenues will be used by the State Commission for statewide education and outreach; eighty percent will go directly to County Commissions to fund local programs. Tehama County expects to receive \$500,000 - 650,000 annually.

The Children and Families Commission is unique because it represents an historic effort to gather input from the public. Each county is directed to create a strategic plan based on extensive input from its local communities, including families, service providers and advocacy groups. The plan outlines how each county will use these new funds to develop comprehensive, integrated systems of support and services for all children, zero to five years of age. Funding decisions are made at the local level to best meet local needs.